1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

CHAPTER XI

ECONOMICS: RESOURCES

[21] ALFRED MARSHALL, discussing possible definitions of Economics, says: 'The less we trouble ourselves with scholastic inquiries as to whether a certain consideration comes within the scope of economics, the better.'[1] If any student of society is entitled to follow this practical advice it is the anthropologist. Clearly, his working definition of economics must be as wide and fluid as possible. In his field every fact referring to what Marshall would call the 'business side of life' must claim his attention; even apparently irrelevant details in the technique of production, exchange, or consumption may be significant because new and not hitherto examined under the aspect of economic problems. Such a wide definition of economics must do justice to three realms of facts: (1) the primary resources, in the sense of the physical substratum on which all productive activity ultimately depends; (2) the technical processes and forms of group organization which make up production in the narrow sense, i.e. which actuate and bring into existence the resources; and (3) the specific needs that exist in a society and on the satisfaction of which the efficiency of a productive system must prove itself.

This, then, will be our definition of the realm of economics: the utilization of resources for the satisfaction of culturally (or socially) standardized needs. The description of the needs themselves, elements of culture as they are, is part of the general description of the society. The relation between resources and the satisfaction of the needs will be examined under the heading of Economic Balance. In the description of the technical processes, however, we shall have to limit our field. In accordance with the general theme of this book we shall be concerned more with the group organization involved in production than with technology proper; we shall view productive labour under the aspect of human occupation rather than under the aspect of technical development. The description of the primary resources and their distribution will form the subject of this first section. It will examine above all that primary and ultimate resource of every productive system, savage or civilized, land.[2]

[1] A. Marshall, *Principles of Economics*, 1930, p. 27.

[2] For various reasons I have thought it better to omit from this book a discussion on hunting and fishing. Hunting is indeed of little importance in the present-day productive system of the country; it has been reduced everywhere to a secondary additional activity in the nature almost of a leisure-time occupation. In some parts of the country (e.g. in Bida and surroundings) hunting has disappeared altogether. Fishing stands in a different category. It is of paramount importance in the riverain area. But a description of the greatly varying fishing techniques in use in Nupe country, and of the very specific forms of labour organization involved in fishing, would lead too far. For the economic system of the country at large fishing becomes important in so far as it produces one of the most highly valued trading-goods of the country both in local and export trade. This aspect of fishing will best be discussed at a later stage, in the chapter on trade.

[224] [226]

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

during my stay in the country, so that my description is based on the account of informants. But their account tallies with the ancestral sacrifices I had seen elsewhere; and the *Dibo Saba* ritual is, in essence, nothing but a sacrifice to the *kuci* of an ancestor, though both the ancestor and his invocation are here matters of public concern. This double significance of the ritual is clearly expressed by the people, who would say that, on this occasion, the chief is performing two sacrifices at once, one for his own 'house', and the other for the 'whole town'. It is interesting to note that the present chief of Doko does not come of the dynasty of Dibo Saba but of a new family, which came to power two generations ago; even so, he continues the sacrifice to this alien ancestor. In other words, the transformation of the chief's private kinship rite into an official and public ceremonial has become complete. In the ceremonial the chief, accompanied by the older men, sacrifices beer, a goat, or some other food over the grave of Dibo Saba and addresses both the *kuci* and *Sokó*. The choice of the sacrificial animal depends on the diviner's instruction. The formula of prayer is of the usual kind, mentioning the need of rain (or whatever the cause), of food in abundance, and ends with the stereotyped wish that 'the whole town may prosper'.

(iii) *Fixed Rituals*

Let me start with the simplest of the three, the ritual called *sakó* (meaning 'Great Deer'). As already mentioned, it is 'owned' by the hereditary hunters of Doko, that is, by a small number of families, all kinsmen of the *Majĩ Egbe* ('Master of the Hunt') and descended from some earlier holder of that office. In Doko everybody is also a hunter, or can be one if he is so inclined, and every house has its bows and arrows, traps, and hunting nets. Conversely, all the hereditary hunters are also farmers. But it falls to them to organize the large-scale drives carried out in the dry season (now increasingly rarely since the bigger game is fast disappearing), and it falls to the head of this group to ensure, by ritual means, success in hunting. He receives a share of the big game killed by any Doko man; he also keeps the horns of buck and deer killed by his own group in a small hut in his house, while other people would throw these trophies away. Whenever the Master set out on a large-scale hunt or desires to invoke his ancestors, he pours a small libation of beer outside this hut, addressing an anonymous *kuci*. In his case, then, the hut containing the trophies replaces the ancestral grave or shrine of other families. Once a year, the same offering is brought in order to secure good hunting for the whole community, the ritual being now performed in the Master's sleeping hut. No particular secrecy surrounds the sacrifice, though it

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

must not be seen by women. I saw it late in August; it was attended (as is the rule) only by the Master and his adult sons, and consisted in pouring beer on the ground, drinking the rest, and breaking some reeds over the place of the libation. The Master spoke thus—'*Sokó*, may the town have health, may everything be prosperous (now that) we are breaking the reeds finally'. The breaking of the reeds was explained to me as follows: 'Reeds grow in the bush, and game is found in the bush'; which devious analogy seems to have little bearing on the very general character of the prayer formula. As regards the latter, let us note that here again a private ceremonial is linked with the well being of the whole community.

Of the two *žiba* rituals I only saw the earlier one, performed in July; I understand, however, that the two performances are exact replicas. The name is explained as meaning *eži bà*, i.e. the 'town prays'; but this interpretation is somewhat doubtful since the same phrase can also be read as *eži 'bà*, 'the place' or 'ground of the town', which would tally with the name of a very similar ritual in other places, called *žikinta*—'the ground (or soil) of the town'. The early *žiba* coincides with the harvest of bullrush millet, the first crop of the year. On the eve of the ceremonial the priest cuts a bundle of millet on his farm and has gruel made from it. About noon the next day he goes to the place of the sacrifice, which closely resembles that of *fitakũ*, accompanied by much the same congregation. A black she-goat is killed (contributed by the chief), blood and beer are poured on the mound of earth (now concealing no sacred 'stone'), and the food is eaten by the people present; a share is once more sent to the chief. In this as in the other ritual in his charge the *Žigí* is assisted by his sons and brothers. The *Žigí* prays twice, first while killing the animal and again when making the offering of beer and blood:

(1) 'May the whole town have health; may it have to eat, may it have to drink, may the whole town have health'.

(2) '*Tsoci* (Our Lord), what we are giving this year, (what) we are doing thus: God may give health (for that reason); the doing of new (things), may it come (to prosper) also next year, also (in) a thousand years.'

When the sacrificial meal is over, the *žiba* assumes the new aspect of a public ceremonial and festivity, which sharply distinguishes it from the *fitakũ* and all other movable rites. The congregation walks back to the village, stopping at the chief's house. The priest alone may enter the chief's sleeping hut, where the latter has been awaiting his visitor, while the others stay in the

HUNTING AND FISHING

224 Hunting is a significant if minor activity in some villages where it is practised by the special guild of hunters under their hereditary head *ndace*, "father of the hunters"). Nets, traps, bows-and-arrows, and occasionally flintlocks are used. Among the separated sections of the Nupe in the more sparsely populated areas, e.g., the Ebe and Basa-Nge, hunting plays a much more important part in the local economy. In the country surrounding Bida hunting has disappeared altogether.

226 The smaller rivers and creeks of Nupe country are rich in fish,[16] which are caught by spear, line, and basket; larger fish are also caught by traps and seine nets. The Kyedye use hooks laid in lines of about 100. The Bataci fish mainly in pools to which special rights attach (see below, p. 40). Nupe women trade dried [439] fish to the Igbona (Yoruba) area of Ilorin Emirate. Dried fish are also exported to Ilorin and farther south from Pategi-Lafiagi.

MARKETS AND TRADE[17]

443 Bida town has six markets, including one night market, and every other town and village has its regular market. Specialist traders travel long distances to the markets, though women who trade only as a side-line rarely attend markets more than 10 miles from their homes. Villages on the trade routes to places such as Bida or Ilorin become "relay stations" at which local traders sell to wholesalers. The stores of the European and Asiatic traders are centres for the marketing of commercial crops.

441 Specialist traders are usually men and women from Bida town. Those who go 443 outside Nupe country may stay months or years in one place, sometimes forming a Nupe enclave. There is a distinction between traders and brokers (*dilali*); the latter undertake to sell goods on commission and are organized under a guild-head.

435 Market prices are well defined and those of local produce fluctuate by season. But many goods have fixed prices and bargaining is rare except for the expensive, more rarely sold commodities.[18] Prices in Bida market are nearly always higher than in the country districts. In the country districts food prices are commonly quoted in cowries, the exchange value of which varies.

439 Railways, river steamers, and road transport have become important for market- 419 ing and in the development of production, and Nupe country is an important transit area in the north–south trade across Nigeria. The Kyedye[19] sub-tribe have a monopoly of the river traffic. Muregi is an important ferry point for Hausa traders. The ferrying rights and duties pass from compound to compound in a cycle which, together with the ferrying fees, is regulated by the Chief of the Kyedye and the village head of Muregi. The Kakanda, who are traders, formerly had the monopoly of the river traffic south of Egan, but now share this with the Kyedye. The Basa-Nge[20] also trade by canoe: their exports are handled by Nupe, Kakanda, and Igbira canoe owners, and include palm kernels, palm-oil, and cotton to Lokoja and Itobe, yams, maize, and beans to Onitsha.

439 Exports from Nupe country consist mainly of agricultural produce—rice, shea-nuts, good quality kola-nuts, smoked fish—and products of the local industries, cloth, straw hats, mats, etc. Imports include foodstuffs, mainly palm-oil, salt, and cheap kola-nuts, also potash and livestock. Re-exports include potash and beans from the north to the south, and palm-oil, salt, and kola-nuts from the south to the north. The import or export trade in one commodity is generally combined with a return trade in another.

[16] See Hermon-Hodge, 1929, p. 181 for a list of Niger fish with their Nupe names.

[17] This section is based mainly on Nadel, 1942, pp. 314–34, and relates to the period before the 1939–45 war.

[18] But according to Malam Aliyu Bida, Nupe are excellent bargainers and are known to the Hausa as *Masu Kolo Kolo*, "the hagglers."

[19] Notes on Kede District, 1950.

[20] Hopkins, 1934.